

INTRODUCTION

THE USC/FAR: PURPOSES AND PROGRESS

ORIGINS

The USC/FAR has its origins in a National Security Council Decision Memorandum (NSDM-98) dated February 9, 1971. In that document the President directed the NSC Under Secretaries Committee (USC) to assume responsibility for assuring interagency coordination of the external foreign affairs research sponsored by various departments and agencies of the Executive Branch.

To comply with this directive, the USC established its Subcommittee on Foreign Affairs Research (USC/FAR) and published Terms of Reference for the subcommittee.*

ACTIVITIES AND PURPOSES

In NSDM-98, the President charged the USC with the annual preparation of a foreign affairs consolidated research plan. The plan was to have a number of features. It was to:

- cover a multiyear period;
- state groupwide and individual agency research goals and priorities;
- utilize regional and functional planning categories, indicating agency responsibilities.

* The external research activities of concern to the USC/FAR are those involving application or advancement of the social sciences and humanities as these bear substantively on foreign areas and international relations. Excluded are those research activities that bear solely on U.S. domestic affairs and those involving exclusively the physical and biological sciences and their related technologies. For additional information on the scope of USC/FAR research concerns, see Appendix C.

The President's directive made clear that four purposes were to be served by the consolidated research plan and other interagency coordination activities:

- to avoid duplication of effort;
- to suggest and facilitate joint funding of particular activities;
- to assure maximum interagency utility of the research product in terms of both content and availability; and
- to enhance the quality of the research product.

This Fourth USC/FAR Plan incorporates all the features directed by the President and serves a number of the purposes. Purposes not served directly or fully by the plan are pursued through one or more of the other elements in the USC/FAR system. This system, in need of still further development and refinement, is depicted in the diagram on the following page.

What follows is a description of how each of the four purposes specified by the President in NSDM-98 is being pursued through the pertinent elements of the system.

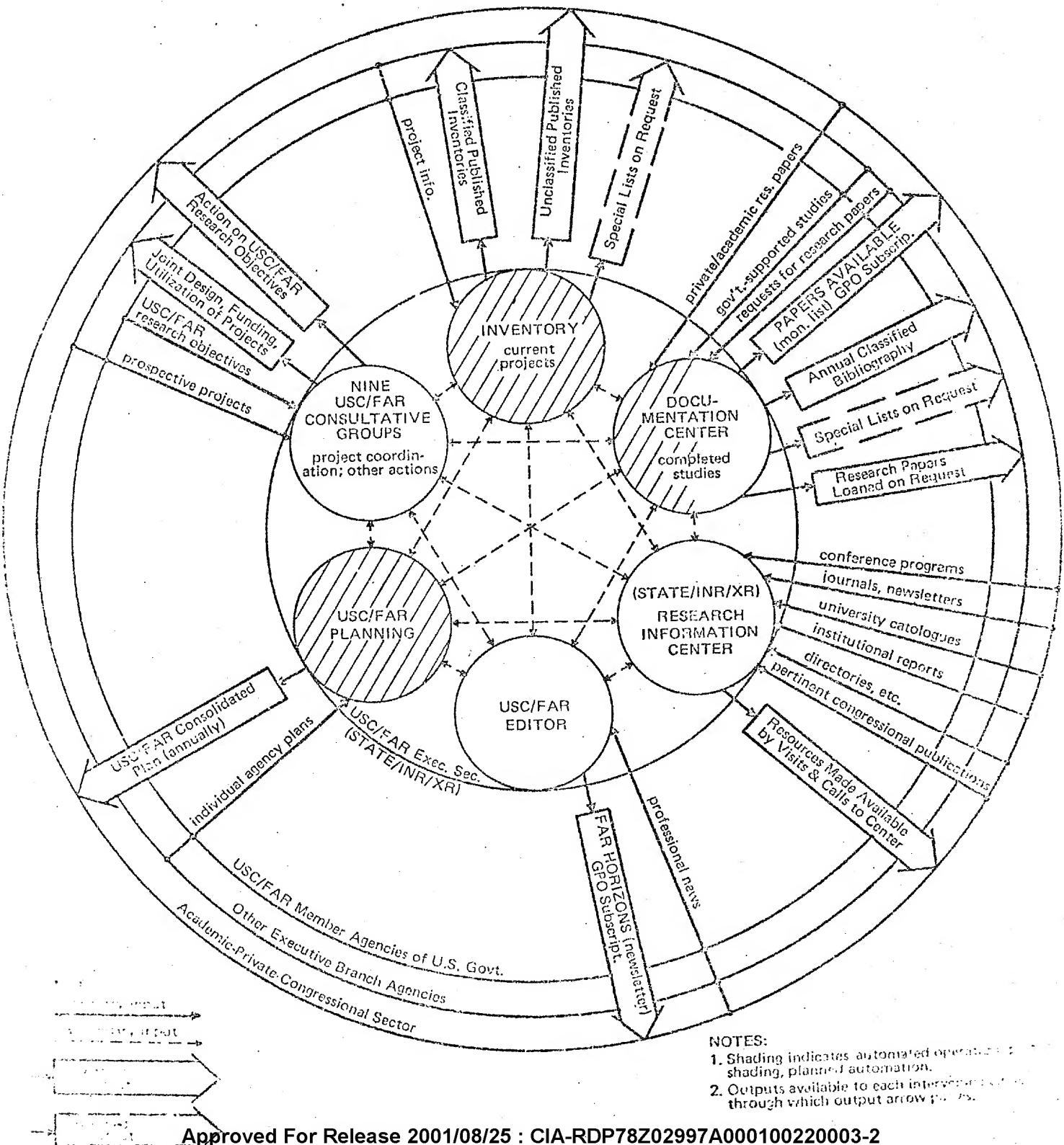
AVOIDANCE OF DUPLICATION

Annual preparation of the USC/FAR Consolidated Research Plan is the starting point for avoiding unintended duplication of effort between and among the programs of the various departments and agencies. In their submissions to the plan, participating agencies alert one another to the likely magnitudes and substantive emphases of their external research efforts for the coming two years. A multifaceted, computer-assisted analysis of these submissions (see Part III) makes it possible to identify areas in which duplication might take place if each agency were to proceed independently.

The analysis in Part III of the plan is so constructed that it highlights matters of particular interest to each of the USC/FAR's nine specialized Consultative Groups. With the plan in hand, research managers can more readily exchange information concerning prospective projects and thus avoid duplication at the critical pre-contract stage when project design is in an advanced but not final state.

Avoiding duplication between new projects, however, is only part of the problem. Equally to be desired is the avoidance of duplication between new and current projects. To this end the Office of the USC/FAR's

An integrated external research planning, information, documentation and publication system for the coordination, joint-funding, improved quality and wider utilization of U.S. Government-supported foreign affairs research.



Executive Secretary prepares and publishes annually an Inventory of Research Projects Completed and in Progress during the preceding fiscal year. The Inventory covering FY-1973 provides information on 678 projects supported by 20 U.S. Government agencies.

The annual inventory has been designed to facilitate USC/FAR activities. It is organized in six volumes (five unclassified--American Republics; East Asia; Europe; Near East, South Asia, and Africa; and International Relations--and one classified) to make it of maximum use to the nine USC/FAR Consultative Groups, as well as to other Government users. (About 900 copies of each of the FY-1973 Inventory volumes were distributed. Being the first computer-assisted inventory, this issue had certain limitations and thus only a few copies were distributed to the private sector on request. These limitations have been overcome, however, and it is expected that the unclassified volumes of the inventory covering FY-1974 projects will be available for purchase by interested parties in the private sector.)

The inventory incorporates the same system for weighting the regional, functional, and purpose characteristics of research as is used in the USC/FAR Plan. This will ultimately provide two important capabilities.

First, the same type of multifaceted, computer-assisted analysis now made in Part III of the plan can be made on all or any selection of the projects in the inventory in order to profile what was actually contracted for in a particular time period. Among other things, this will provide the agencies participating in the USC/FAR planning process with more useful knowledge of what research is already funded.

Second, Government officers will be able to request special lists of current projects dealing with quite specific subjects. These lists will make it possible for research managers developing new projects to avoid duplication and assure coordination in a more timely and effective manner.

The USC/FAR system is based upon the premise that avoidance of duplication is a minimal form of coordination; it may prevent waste by some standards, but it does not assure wise expenditure. Indeed, when dealing with the frontiers of knowledge in a field as complex as foreign affairs, wise expenditure may at times call for both deliberate replication and planned multiple approaches that are at least overlapping if not duplicative. Such deliberate and planned activities cannot be brought off, however, unless there are more positive forms of coordination. These forms also advance the additional USC/FAR purposes discussed below.

JOINT FUNDING

In the USC/FAR system, joint funding of research activities also originates in the planning process. Part III of the plan alerts agencies to common and overlapping substantive research interests. In addition, the analysis in Part III makes it possible to state groupwide research goals and priorities (see Part II). These "USC/FAR Research Objectives" help delineate areas where joint funding may be particularly appropriate.

Action in pursuit of a research objective is ordinarily assigned to one of the USC/FAR's nine specialized consultative groups. Here matters of common interest can be looked at more closely and prospects for joint funding explored. Part II indicates that this has happened in some of the consultative groups as they have sought to advance the USC/FAR Research Objectives assigned to them. There are also indications that the prospects for future jointly funded activities are bright in certain areas.

Joint funding also emerges in other ways related to but outside the formal meetings of the consultative groups. It was anticipated that establishing living links among agency research officers would be more important than formal group proceedings. Informal consultations through the living system are difficult to track, but there is solid evidence--at least in the recent experience of the Department of State--that they are productive of jointly funded activities. In FY-1974, for example, five other departments and agencies joined with State in funding four projects costing a total of \$257,694, of which State contributed \$134,719.

Other types of coordination also take place through the USC/FAR's consultative network. Though unanticipated in the language of NSDM-98, there is developing what might be called "coordinate funding." This also is difficult to track throughout the system. But it is evidenced in a number of recent cases involving the Departments of State and Defense in which each simultaneously funded separate contracts with the same institution--contracts designed for the fuller exploration of topics of mutual interest.

Thus joint and other collaborative funding arrangements appear to be increasing. With full automation of the USC/FAR inventory of current projects, and with more complete and timely project reporting by the agencies, it will be possible to provide a better measure of joint funding.

INTERAGENCY UTILITY: CONTENT

Joint funding provides readily available evidence that the end product of a research activity is expected to be of substantive utility to two or more agencies. Coordinate funding, though not as easily detected, also provides evidence of this expectation. The USC/FAR Consultative Group network results, however, in still other, less visible arrangements that advance the interagency utility of research activities.

Joint project design is one type of arrangement. It sometimes takes place when, in the course of a consultative group meeting, an officer from one agency learns that another agency is developing a project in which he has an interest. The informal consultative network then enters the picture. The officers concerned may consult more or less intensely as the project design takes shape. They may involve colleagues from their respective agencies and convene meetings to consider the research design. They may try to arrange joint or coordinate funding, but whether or not they do (and, if they do, whether or not they succeed), the result is a project that better serves the needs of two or more agencies, rather than just the interests of the originating agency.

Joint project monitoring also advances the interagency utility of research activities. Joint monitoring may be the natural follow-up to joint design; it almost invariably is to joint or coordinate funding. But joint monitoring may also arise in the absence of collaborative design and funding arrangements. Through a variety of USC/FAR channels, an officer in one agency may learn of a substantively interesting project sponsored by another agency. He can then establish a closer association either directly or by engaging the assistance of the Office of the USC/FAR Executive Secretary. At a minimum he can arrange to receive a copy of the product as soon as it becomes available--often in draft. At a maximum, he may be invited to attend meetings with the contractor or grantee convened by the sponsoring agency. Thus, to the extent feasible, he may help shape the project so the end product is of greater utility to his agency. If that is not possible, he may still learn a great deal from the project while it is in process and may develop ideas for coordinate or follow-on projects for possible funding by his own agency.

Joint participation in research conferences, colloquia, seminars, etc., is another way the USC/FAR agencies are enhancing the interagency utility of the content of their research activities. Most agencies convene conferences with outside experts for purposes that range from the design of research activities to the examination of important policy issues. The consultative network and information exchange activities of

the USC/FAR make it progressively easier for an agency convening or otherwise supporting a symposium to identify those officers in other agencies who can contribute to or profit from the conference.

State Department experience in FY-1974 illustrates this point. State convened 40 colloquia of various sizes that year. With the exception of five small seminars, every one involved participants from at least one other agency; 15 involved participants from five or more other agencies. One particularly large and complex conference, on the implications of direct broadcast satellites, was designed with the collaboration of officers from 10 other agencies.

INTERAGENCY UTILITY: AVAILABILITY

The interagency utility of research products is also advanced by making those products available to interested readers in agencies other than the sponsoring one. This is a natural result of collaborative funding, design, monitoring, and conference activities. Beyond that, most agencies habitually make a selective initial distribution in Government of their external research products.

Utility, however, is rarely a one-time, limited quality of research reports. Broader initial utilization, and unanticipated secondary utilizations, can be achieved by making it easier for Government officers to identify and retrieve research products as they become available and as later needs for them become apparent. Indeed, the USC/FAR Terms of Reference charge the Executive Secretary to assure "that copies of all research reports resulting from agency projects are accessioned by the Foreign Affairs Research Documentation Center and member agencies alerted to their availability."

In response to this charge, the Office of the USC/FAR Executive Secretary has put additional emphasis upon accessioning Government-supported studies. Whereas in FY-1972, 14% (230) of the 1,648 external research reports accessioned by the center were Government-supported, in FY-1974, 22% (499) of the 2,235 reports were of that type. The center, which retires papers after five years, now has 11,500 items for loan to Government readers on request. In the last three years, an annual average of almost 10,000 loan requests have been serviced.

To inform its users about its holdings, the center publishes and disseminates 1,300 copies of its monthly accessions list--Papers Available. A recently instituted annual bibliography lists only Government-supported research reports in the center. Called Studies in Foreign Affairs, this classified list is made available to officers in appropriate agencies. The third issue, covering reports accessioned in fiscal years 1972-74, will be distributed in September, 1974.

In order for the center to reach all potential users and provide them with more timely and flexible service, it needs to suffer the pains of automation before it can achieve the benefits. It is hoped that a feasible plan for automating the center can be developed in the course of the next year. The thought is to use an expanded version of the same system of categories now used in the USC/FAR Plan and Inventory for characterizing the contents of research reports newly accessioned by the center. The center would then be able to automate the preparation of its accessions lists and bibliographies. It would also be able to receive and respond in a timely fashion to requests from users for tailored searches of its holdings, thereby enhancing and extending the utility of research products. Present resource constraints, however, make it necessary to temper hope for rapid movement in this direction.

ENHANCEMENT OF QUALITY

Quality control of research products is an inescapable responsibility of the agency managing a particular external research project. There is little the USC/FAR can do directly to advance this purpose. Experience has demonstrated, however, that there are a number of ways in which this may take place indirectly.

Experience with jointly funded projects suggests that management responsibility for such a project is best centered in that participating agency with the most profound substantive concern and expertise in the subject matter, provided it also has experienced research management talent to devote to the task.

An important part of quality control consists of wise selection of external research performers. The USC/FAR consultative network facilitates the informal exchange among agency research managers of their experience with various research institutions and individuals. The joint monitoring of projects and joint conferencing give agency research managers direct exposure to a wider range of performers in action than would otherwise be the case. Current project information available through the USC/FAR Inventory, and research products made available by the Documentation Center, help agency research managers assess the capabilities and performance of research contractors and grantees.

In the final analysis, however, quality is in the eye of the beholder. A sponsoring agency need not insist on a Cyclopean role in this regard, but clearly its role is inescapably large and central.

There is one other USC/FAR activity that indirectly serves to enhance quality. That is to share as much as possible the Government's foreign affairs external research products and concerns with the private sector--and especially with the academic community.

IMPROVEMENT OF GOVERNMENT-ACADEMIC RELATIONS

The language of NSDM-98 does not specifically direct improvement of Government-academic relations in the field of foreign affairs research. However, such a purpose was among the considerations leading to the preparation of NSDM-98; the USC/FAR Terms of Reference specifically charge the Executive Secretary to disseminate relevant information and documents to the private research community "to the maximum extent consistent with the national security" and "under policies approved by the group." The USC/FAR is further charged to take other appropriate steps "to establish mutual trust and good working relations among the governmental, nongovernmental, intergovernmental, and foreign research sectors."

The USC/FAR system has been designed and is progressively being developed to serve this purpose, for example:

- The Office of the Executive Secretary publishes a quarterly newsletter--FAR Horizons--on behalf of the USC/FAR. It is distributed widely throughout the Government and is available on a subscription basis from the Government Printing Office (GPO); at latest count there were 750 paid subscribers. (See the inside back cover of this Fourth Plan for additional information about this periodical.)
- Individual scholars, professional associations and research institutions have been generous in responding to requests from the USC/FAR Documentation Center for research papers that can be accessioned and loaned to Government readers. In return, the Documentation Center sent copies of its monthly accessions list, Papers Available, to those in the private sector who requested that service. These lists alert scholars to new research products produced by their colleagues under either Government or private auspices.

By late 1973 requests from the private sector to receive Papers Available on a regular basis became so numerous that this publication was put on sale through the GPO. Since January 1974, more than 225 paid subscriptions have been entered. (See the inside back cover of this Fourth Plan for additional information about Papers Available.)

The center lends to scholars copies of unclassified research products supported by the Department of State. It also facilitates the loan of studies supported by other agencies. It does not, however, service requests from the private sector for papers produced under private auspices.

- Plans are now being developed for interested parties in the private sector to purchase copies of the five unclassified volumes of the USC/FAR Inventory covering FY-1974 projects. It is expected that this practice will continue in ensuing years.
- Several thousand copies of the Third USC/FAR Consolidated Plan for Foreign Affairs Research FY-1974-75 were distributed to scholars and others in the private sector, many with the assistance of the Department of State's Bureau of Public Affairs. News about and excerpts from the plan were carried in a number of professional journals and newsletters. Scores of scholars have written to the Office of the Executive Secretary offering comments, providing information on current research interests, and making inquiries.
- The Executive Secretary has met with almost every group of academic participants in the Department of State's "Scholar-Diplomat Seminars Program" to brief them on the USC/FAR and solicit their ideas. By July 1974, more than 1,000 younger scholars had participated in these seminars.
- Leading scholars in the China studies field, concerned as are their colleagues with the dwindling support for research and training in that field, have sought assistance from the Chairman of the USC/FAR. At his direction, arrangements have been made to convene a Special USC/FAR Consultative Group on China to consider a range of problems in this field. (For additional information on USC/FAR activities to facilitate Government-academic sharing of data on China see Part II -- Objective II-2 -- of this Fourth Plan.)

Evidence of the impact of these and other USC/FAR activities on Government-academic relations is scattered and difficult to assess. Three things, however, seem clear: (1) The channels and volume of communication have expanded; (2) There is no visible evidence of

negative impact; (3) The dialogue among Government and academic professionals with a shared interest in bringing knowledge based on research to the understanding and conduct of foreign affairs is, despite the variety of disciplinary, ideological and institutional perspectives involved, proceeding on a professional level.

LOOKING AHEAD

The USC/FAR system is in place but far from perfect. The following are the more important and urgent tasks to be accomplished if the USC/FAR is continually and fully to serve the purposes of its Presidential directive.

1. More agencies need to participate in the USC/FAR planning process. In the Fourth Plan, both the Department of the Treasury and the Central Intelligence Agency have for the first time made partial submissions (see Appendix A). They are prepared to make full submissions during next year's planning cycle so their data can be consolidated and analyzed in Part III along with that of the other fully participating agencies. In addition, the Executive Secretary is prepared to contact other agencies whose participation is desirable and encourage them to make partial if not complete submissions in the next planning cycle.
2. Agency submission of current project information for inclusion in the inventory needs to be more timely and complete. Few agencies submit information within the desired 10 days after signature of a project contract or grant. Perhaps when the automated inventory demonstrates its versatility and quick response time, agencies will have greater incentive to meet the requirement for quick submissions--only by doing so will they be assured of adequately informative quick responses. In the interim, the Office of the Executive Secretary will continue to request and encourage timely submissions.
3. The performance of USC/FAR Consultative Groups is uneven. Some have met with sufficient frequency that a pertinent informal consultative network has emerged, thus eliminating the need for frequent meetings in the future. Others may need to meet more frequently to ascertain the extent of common interests and forge a more reliable informal consultative network. Similarly, some Consultative Groups have acted with more vigor than others in pursuit of assigned USC/FAR Research Objectives. In part, this is attributable to reassignment of officers--a practice that characterizes many personnel systems in the foreign affairs and military agencies and requires extra effort if a living consultative system is to be sustained.

4. The Foreign Affairs Research Documentation Center will be able to perform much more effectively once it is automated. The Office of the Executive Secretary is prepared to move on this front as rapidly as existing resource constraints permit or can be removed.

5. All agencies could facilitate the work of the USC/FAR Documentation Center by setting up internal procedures to assure the timely, voluntary deposit of their external research products in the center. The center's staff, which must now expend time tracking down completed studies, is prepared to devote equal time to assist participating agencies develop more effective procedures.

6. Many participating agencies could usefully take a new look at the definition of the USC/FAR "research universe" (see Appendix B) and try harder to assure that their planning and inventory submissions and their Documentation Center deposits are of appropriate scope. The Office of the Executive Secretary is prepared to offer assistance to agencies in this regard.

7. As the USC/FAR progressively develops a more coherent picture of Government-supported research in the broad field of foreign affairs, many in and out of Government feel more acutely the need for a coherent picture of privately funded foreign affairs research programs, projects, and studies. Such a picture of the private research enterprise would clearly be of value to the USC/FAR agencies. It is likely that it would be of even greater value to the private sector itself. The Executive Secretary is prepared to discuss with and receive from elements in the private sector proposals for systems that would yield the needed picture, and to bring promising proposals to the attention of appropriate agencies for possible funding assistance.

8. Some USC/FAR and other Government agencies are concerned that there has been over the past several years a decline of both private and governmental funding for academic research on foreign areas and international relations. One major Government-academic effort is now under way to assess the dimensions of this and other problems in the broader field of international education.* Many of the USC/FAR agencies believe that the U.S. Government has an interest in the ability of the academic community to sustain vigorous, independent, diverse and creative research programs on all aspects of foreign affairs. To this end, they are prepared to explore, through the USC/FAR, ways to be of assistance.

* This effort, managed by the American Council on Education, consists of a committee on the general question plus a series of task forces. It has the support and participation of the Ford Foundation and several Government agencies, most notably the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs in the Department of State, the National Science Foundation, the Agency for International Development, and the Office of Education in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.